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ABSTRACT

The Centre for Educational Research and Innovation of the Organisation for Economic and Cooperative Development (OECD) has as one of its priority activities the exploration for new strategies for equality of educational opportunity as part of the process of educational growth in the highly industrialized and technological societies of the OECD area. This activity is composed of an experimental and an analytical wing; this document discusses the latter. The analytical wing is concerned with the entire age group (and therefore the whole school population) and with the alternative strategies for bringing about equality of educational opportunity. This paper is divided into two parts. Part I outlines the various approaches to the problem of equal educational opportunity and Part II examines the concept of recurrent education in more detail. An added purpose of this document is to outline the framework of thought and to state the questions to which later publications in the series will be addressed. (Author/CK)

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Centre for Educational Research and Innovation

EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

1

a statement
of the problem, with special reference to recurrent education

ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The Centre for Educational Research and Innovation was established in June 1968 for an initial period of three years, with the help of a grant from the Ford Foundation which was later supplemented by a grant from the Shell Group of Companies.

The main objectives of the Centre are as follows:

- *To promote and support the development of research activities in education and undertake such research activities where appropriate;*
- *To promote and support pilot experiments with a view to introducing and testing innovations in educational systems;*
- *To promote the development of co-operation between Member countries in the field of educational research and innovation.*

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PREFACE

The idea that education can be an important means to equality in societies where men are born unequal is, and will remain, a powerful one. It is probably this idea more than any other which explains the fact that, as societies grow richer, there is a rapidly accelerating demand for educational opportunities. Education comes to be seen by families and by the public at large as the key to the social mobility. Yet we are bound to admit, as we survey the educational scene after several decades of rapid educational growth, that the limits of education as a provider of equality begin to become apparent. Today the picture that emerges is that of educational systems which reflect as much as they transform the existing social structures. The competition for educational success appears to operate in favour of those already privileged by the circumstances of birth. Despite educational expenditures which have been growing nearly twice as fast as national wealth, there is a baffling failure to overcome the starting handicaps of the socially disadvantaged, and the 1970s will undoubtedly see new approaches to this fundamental problem.

The idea that has failed is the one that starts with the proposition that equality is provided when equal facilities are provided. But what research shows is that the vicious circle of unequality starts very soon after birth, and is very hard to break in later years. By the time the child enters the main stream of education the dice are already loaded. This is why the idea of "compensatory" education, through which extra efforts are made in favour of disadvantaged children in the very early years of their lives, is gaining ground and leading to the rapid expansion of pre-primary education in many OECD countries.

Already, however, it is evident that the expansion of pre-primary education can only be looked upon as *one* of the "strategies" for increasing equality of educational opportunity. First of all, its effects fade if they are not followed up in the later stages of the educational system. Secondly, there is a growing body of opinion that opportunities for the individual to use education to improve his position in society should not be the monopoly of youth. If motivation is so indispensable to success in education, why not provide educational opportunities in early adulthood when many individuals, having tested themselves out

in work, know more clearly what they want? A "recurrent" educational system, in which educational opportunities are spread out over the life-pattern of the individual, is the response to this question that is now being discussed in some OECD countries.

Thus, the notion that equality was to be sought through equal provision of resources now finds itself extended in two ways: first by the recognition that the "quality" of teaching is at stake, due to the fact that socially disadvantaged groups need new and different methods of teaching; and second, in the idea that a new way of relating the life pattern of the individual to the educational system is needed. These various "strategies" would, if implemented, be very costly in terms of resources. Some attempt to analyse their effectiveness in relation to the goal of equal opportunity is now indispensable, if education policies are to realistically reflect the contribution they can make to equality in modern, affluent societies. This is the aim of CERI's work on this subject.

The report now issued, which was prepared by L. Emmerij assisted by D. Kallen and K. Antonsen, attempts to state the problem and provide a framework within which subsequent analysis will proceed. It is the first in a series which will analyse the various strategies available to policy-makers, leading to suggestions for new policies in the 1970s.

J.R. Gass
Director of the Centre
for Educational Research and Innovation

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

One of the priority activities of the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation is to explore new strategies for equality of educational opportunity as part of the process of educational growth in the highly industrialized and technological societies of the OECD area. This activity is composed of an analytical and of an experimental wing.

The experimental wing is concerned with co-operation between ongoing educational programmes for socially disadvantaged populations in a certain number of OECD countries. These programmes usually concentrate on very specific and relatively small groups in the population, such as immigrant children and children living in slums. These groups could best be described as the *conspicuously disadvantaged.*

The concrete programmes carried out under the experimental wing may be considered as laboratory experiments to explore changes in the learning function and the learning environment. Such experiments need to be evaluated in order to see how far their results can be applied more generally, how the processes they suggest are related to alternative ways for achieving the same results, and how the wider implications for the economy and for society in general may be brought into the picture.

Thus, the analytical wing is concerned with the *entire* age group – and therefore with the *whole school population* – and with the *alternative* strategies for bringing about equality of educational opportunity. Moreover, this part of the activity goes beyond the technical aspects of the problem, and deals with decision-making structures and processes. It includes the exploration of the alternative educational futures which would result from the introduction of the different strategies to reach equal educational opportunity.

The present paper is an attempt to pose the problem of equal educational opportunity in this wider context. In Part One it outlines the various approaches to the problem, and in Part Two examines the concept of recurrent education in more detail. Its purpose is to outline the framework of thought and to state the questions to which later publications in the series will be addressed.

Particular emphasis is placed on the concept of recurrent education because it is the most general and recent of the strategies pro-

posed. The idea of recurrent education is based on the assumption that there are no reasons to limit the educational period to the early years of life, but that on the contrary, there are very strong arguments in favour of spreading out the formal educational period over later years of life. It should be clearly understood that recurrent education will apply to the post-compulsory levels of education (after a compulsory school period of 10-12 years, according to the country situation). One could, for example, imagine that each individual would get at birth say, 16 educational tickets, each ticket being the equivalent of one year of schooling. Of these he would consume 10 or 12 years in a row, starting at age 6, whereas the remaining 6 or 4 educational tickets could be consumed at any period of the individual's life.

Part One

STRATEGIES FOR EQUALIZING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

INTRODUCTION

The idea that all children should have the opportunity of being educated made its appearance only in the nineteenth century. The introduction of compulsory primary education was based upon two main concepts. The first held that individual freedom and happiness depended upon increased knowledge – a concept well in tune with the liberal ideas of the nineteenth century. The second, of a much more materialistic nature, viewed basic education as a necessity resulting from the industrial revolution. These two concepts have had, and continue to have, a major influence on educational policy, though nowadays they are expressed in different terms; we call them, respectively, equality of educational opportunity and investment in human capital.

Equality of educational opportunity has been facilitated, in the first instance, by such measures as the abolition of school fees, the free distribution of textbooks and other teaching material, free meals and, often, free transport to and from schools. Many minor obstacles to an increasing participation of all social classes in education have thus been removed. A rationale of this policy was the belief that the spread of education would lead to a greater social mobility. In view of the growing occupational mobility consequent upon the industrial revolution, it was believed that increasing *educational* opportunity would lead to an increasing *occupational* opportunity.

The human capital concept took on new life after World War II, when the heavy emphasis on economic growth, together with the profound changes in the economic and technological structures of society, produced corresponding shifts in the skill structure of the labour force. This evolution clearly called for corresponding changes in the educational system. In most cases, however, the changes which were brought about affected the scale rather than the structure, method or concept of education. It was a matter of adding to the system without interfering with the nature of the system itself. There is some evidence to support the view that financial constraints, caused by heavy investments in the economic and other social sectors, but also the predominantly quantitative approach to human capital investment, have led to a situation where the evolution of the educational system was severely limited in its possibilities for fundamental changes, and

only allowed to proceed on less expensive lines. Whatever fundamental changes in the structure and content of education have taken place have been due *primarily* to the pressure of social demand for education and to social objectives rather than those implicit in the human capital approach. The trend towards comprehensive education at the secondary level is a case in point.

I

THE PRESENT SITUATION

The past twenty years have witnessed dramatic changes, in the scale of education at all levels. The demographic explosion, the greatly increased social demand for education engendered by a rise in personal incomes, shifts in the occupational structure and a changed attitude towards education, and lastly, emphasis on the economic benefits of education, all these factors have been instrumental in creating what has come to be called the educational explosion. But a careful analysis reveals that, in many cases, this tremendous expansion has had little effect on social disparities in educational participation. Although everyone is getting more in *absolute* terms, in *relative* terms the situation is much the same as before. On the basis of an OECD statistical survey* which reviews evidence from nineteen Member countries, the situation may be summed up as follows:

i) Considerable social selection takes place below the university level, especially at the secondary level. It favours the upper and middle classes, and thus creates a social differential in eligibility for higher education. Time trends show no tendency for this selection to lessen, except in countries where participation rates in primary and secondary education are exceptionally high.

ii) Young people from upper classes are highly over-represented in a statistical sense in higher education – over-represented that is, in relation to the proportion of the same classes in the total labour force.

iii) Young people from the middle classes are also over-represented among students, though less so than those from the upper classes; and young people from the lower classes are under-represented in the student body.

* This evidence was presented to the recent OECD Conference on Policies for Educational Growth and will be published in a series presenting the Conference proceedings.

iv) Educational disparities, as measured by the index of dissimilarity, * are slightly narrowing in the majority of countries, but only very slightly.

v) An increase in the participation rate per 1 000 active males of the age group 45-54 ** was observed for all social classes, but the gain for the lowest class was appreciably smaller than that for the highest class – which suggests that disparities have been widening in the recent past. This conclusion is based on the evidence of a few countries only.

vi) Differences in participation in particular academic disciplines by socio-economic category, though exhibiting a rather broad selection of academic fields by students of all classes, show a definite tendency by students to choose a field closely related to their social background.

The limited scope of data on educational participation by social category does not allow for precise comparisons of social disparities between countries and over time, but the phenomenon is clearly universal. In almost every country reviewed, the opportunities for education are very great for children from the upper classes, good for those from the middle classes, and distinctly poor for those from the lower classes or with an agricultural background. The differences may be greater in some countries than in others, but, in most cases, the similarities are more marked than the dissimilarities. In short, social differences in educational participation seem to be a pervasive and constant characteristic of educational structures in all countries. What change has taken place has been gradual and has not so far appreciably altered the above picture.

The differences are largely, though not exclusively, due to social differences in educational *achievement*. These can be observed right from the beginning of the school career; indeed, there are fundamental differences in the amount and quality of education acquired in primary school. Investigations undertaken in the USA have suggested that:

i) the deprived pupil needs 0.43 years of additional educational effort per year to catch up with the non-deprived pupil; ***

* This index represents the total percentage of students or of the labour force which would have to shift to another socio-economic category to allow for equality of the two distributions.

** Whereas the number of students from a given social group is normally known, the total age group of the same social group is rarely available. That is why we have chosen the age group 45-54 as giving a reasonably close approximation for a comparison of students with *all* young people of the same age group, because persons in this age bracket are most likely to have children of university age.

*** See, *Analysis of Education for the Disadvantaged,* Office of Programme Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Office of Education, Washington D.C., August 1967.

ii) immediately after the end of compulsory schooling, the drop-out rate of deprived children begins to rise steeply, reaching between 15 and 30% for the 16-17 age group.*

European data also show wide differences in drop-out rates according to social origin.

To sum up, one can say that children from lower classes enter the educational system with a handicap which manifests itself first, in low levels of achievement, then, in high drop-out rates. These findings, which trace the causes of this situation back to early childhood, have resulted in the introduction of so-called compensatory educational programmes, which are discussed below.

Social disparities in educational achievement are an important factor in the inequality of educational opportunity debate. Among the other factors it is necessary to mention motivation and the attitude of parents towards education. inherited attitudes of certain social groups have undoubtedly played a most important role in slowing down the evolution towards social equality of education. The lack of motivation, and even prejudice, may keep talented children away from secondary and higher education; the influence of the home and the environment may be stronger than the latent desire of the individual for education. But if the result is abstention from formal education at this early stage, a change of attitude on the part of the individual may occur later, when his personality has matured and he develops an incentive. Hence the idea of "recurrent education", which is discussed at some length in Part Two.

It is clear that much still remains to be done if equality of educational opportunity is to be achieved. The considerable rise in personal incomes, the massive expansion of enrolments, the removal of physical obstacles such as school fees, etc., all these are necessary, but apparently not sufficient, conditions for achieving social equality in education. This raises the whole problem of the relative influence exerted by the school, on the one hand, and by external and divergent non-school factors, on the other. Clearly, equality of school *inputs* has ceased to be a valid criterion; what really counts is the *effects* which these inputs have on bringing about equality of *outputs*.**

* U.S. Bureau of the Census, "School Enrolment: October 1964", *Current Population Reports*, Series P.20, No. 148 (Feb. 8, 1966).

** For a discussion on this point, see James S. Coleman, "The Concept of Equality of Educational Opportunity" in *Equal Educational Opportunity, Harvard Educational Review*, Harvard University Press, 1969. It is important to keep in mind Coleman's point that equality of output "does *not* imply that all students' achievements come to be identical, but only that the averages for two population groups that begin at different levels come to be identical. The diversity of individual scores could be as great as, or greater than, the diversity at grade 1". (p. 23).

II

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES

One can distinguish three theoretical approaches to an explanatory analysis of social disparities in educational participation: they may be labelled the cultural theory, the educational theory, and the structural theory. The first puts relatively more emphasis on the characteristics of the population before entering the educational system, such as the family pedagogical environment, i.e. the attitude towards education, the language spoken in the home and by the peer group, the education of the parents, etc. The second puts more emphasis on the school and teacher variables and could be called the optimistic theory, because it believes that the influence of the school could be increased in relation to that of the non-school external factors on which the other two theories concentrate. Lastly, the structural theory lays emphasis on economic and social constraints, and broadens the concept of the effects of education to include, for instance, the effects of education on jobs and on income.*

Each of these three approaches is clearly a partial one, and a general theory would have to embrace them all. But there is little doubt that recent strategies aimed at equalizing educational opportunities have been inspired mainly by the educational theory. The most important of these strategies are reviewed below.

1. PRE-SCHOOL TRAINING

Pre-school training has been in use, in one form or another, for some time. More recently, special programmes have been designed co-ordinating as much as possible this pre-school training with primary school in order to bring children into an appropriate educational environment before the start of compulsory education. One of the better known examples is "Head Start" adopted in the United States. This project

* See, for example, Samuel Bowles, "Towards Equality of Educational Opportunity" in *Equal Educational Opportunity, op. cit.*

"... is designed to enrich the lives of children during the years when they grow and learn most quickly – the years when they are learning how to learn. Children of the poor generally reach school age lagging far behind their middle class contemporaries in their ability to perform and absorb in the classroom. The schools as they now exist fail to close this gap. Because the relative handicap of those children who start out behind remains almost constant, their actual lag in educational achievement grows greater through the school years. Head Start has rightly focused our attempts to ease this gap on the pre-school period of life."

All such programmes are based on the assumption that the intelligence level, which is an important factor in determining school achievement, is not fixed genetically, but is responsive to environmental influences during the first formative years. In this connection, the effects of the Head Start programme are being evaluated thoroughly. Preliminary reports suggest that the programme has not yet proved as effective as had earlier been thought, and that, so far, its long-term effects have been slight. One of the early findings was that Head Start children appear to "fall back" after entering the regular school system. The reason for this is not yet clear, but it may be that non-Head Start children just "catch up". Research has shown that every child shows an initial spurt in aptitude when it first enters school, and it may be that in Head Start children this spurt manifests itself in the pre-school programme, while in non-Head Start children it appears in the regular classroom. However this may be, the fact remains that the findings are not yet conclusive, and that the whole problem of pre-school training is much more complicated and fraught with frustrations than was thought previously.

The CERI Meeting in New York in January 1969 – which brought together some American and European groups working on this problem – arrived at similar conclusions.*

2. COMPENSATORY EDUCATION AT THE PRIMARY LEVEL

With compensatory education, the emphasis shifts to the early years of schooling proper. Here, the main effort is directed towards modifying traditional curricula and teaching methods as well as introducing a range of educational supporting services so as to enable socially disadvantaged children to make contact with the outside community. In this connection, the importance of language development as a precondition for later school performance in all subjects is being increasingly stressed.

In the United States, Title I of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act has provided very large funds to improve education in areas with large concentrations of children from low income groups, and the Follow Through Programme has been specially devised for such

* See, *American Experience on Educational Programmes for the Socially Disadvantaged*, OECD-CERI, forthcoming.

children who have also participated in a full year of Head Start or similar pre-school programmes. A recent report published by the US Office of Education evaluates Title I as follows:

> "The implication that school resources are not being rearranged in a very effective manner to achieve the expected cognitive gains of students can be deduced from the analysis of disparate reports submitted by localities in connection with Title I. These reports imply that very little change in reading achievements has occurred as a result of the implementation of Title I projects. Granted that these reports are fragmentary and only report achievement of a small proportion of projects, our impression is that the projects which reported had a higher than average investment in resources. Hence, the other projects probably showed even bleaker achievement gains.
> The reports for 1967 and 1968 indicated that less than one-fifth of the Title I participants achieved a significant gain in reading, roughly two-thirds showed no change, and the rest showed some loss.
> It is also interesting to note that the majority of gains were attained in the higher grades. This is contrary to popular impression. Thus, it would appear that Title I programmes which motivated older children were more successful than the remedial programmes at a lower age." *

Certain of the more experimental compensatory programmes attempt to change the organisation of the school and of the classrooms. A case in point is the More Effective Schools Programme (MES) in New York City. This has reduced the number of pupils per teacher by more than half so as to increase correspondingly the attention given to the individual pupil. But there has been no evidence to show that such a measure would change the relative positions of the privileged and non-privileged pupils. After two years, the pupils in MES schools exhibited the classical pattern of increasing academic retardation. This is, of course, in line with the now well-documented fact that a drastic reduction in the pupil-teacher ratio is a necessary but not sufficient condition of effective compensation. As pointed out in the final evaluation of MES:

> "Despite the [...] organisational changes, little has happened in the way of innovation or restructuring in the basic teaching process. Observers noted that a majority of lessons they saw could have been taught to larger classes with no loss in effectiveness [...]. All levels of staff noted that the basic weakness of the programme, or their major disappointment with it, centred about the functioning of teachers, which they attributed to inexperience and lack of preparation." **

* J. Froomkin and D. Dugan (ed.), *Inequality: Studies in Elementary and Secondary Education,* Planning Paper 69.2, U.S. Office of Education, June 1969. See contributions by J. Froomkin and H. Piccariello.

** This paragraph on MES is based on David K. Cohen, "Policy for the Public Schools: Compensation and Integration", in *Equal Educational Opportunity, op. cit.*

The general criticism of the American Compensatory educational programmes is that they have concentrated heavily upon the deficiencies of children, and neglected to give serious attention to the deficiencies of schools. As noted by Cohen:

> "... so much has been made of the deprivations children are supposed to have inflicted upon the schools that hardly any serious thought has been given to the institutional deficiencies of schools which regularly are inflicted upon children."

Most programmes provide additional services which are supposed to make up for the cumulative effects of poverty and discrimination, but they leave the rest of the educational system unchanged. In that sense, one could say that they are piling wooden ploughs on wooden ploughs. *

It may be added that the American programmes emphasize equality of educational opportunity between races and tend to lose sight of the gross inequalities of educational opportunity between one social class and another. European programmes will, of course, have to concentrate more on the latter aspect.

3. COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL

Comprehensive education at the secondary level has been introduced in some Member countries and is being considered in others. It represents a more or less radical break with the traditional selective system which prevails in most countries. Its consequences cannot be easily compared internationally, because the meaning of comprehensive education varies from one country to another.**

In terms of organisational differentiation one can distinguish between *track differentiation,* in which the pupils are assigned to different lines of study in the same type of school; *class differentiation,* in which the pupils have, on the whole, the same curriculum, but are divided into parallel classes on a certain grade level according to some criterion of general ability, such as achievement, test scores, grade point average, or intelligence test scores; and differentiation by *ability grouping or "setting"*, in which the pupils within a given grade are grouped and re-grouped in parallel classes in certain subjects according to their progress in these subjects. This means that they are re-grouped for each subject. An example of the first type of differentiation is the organisation of grade 9 in Swedish comprehensive schools and the various lines of the continuation schools. An example of the second type of differentiation is provided by streaming in British comprehensive schools.

* For a criticism of compensatory programmes along these lines, see Mario Fantini and Gerald Weinstein, *The Disadvantaged: Challenge to Education,* New York, 1968.

** The following paragraphs are based on T. Husén and G. Boalt, *Educational Research and Educational Change – The Case of Sweden,* Stockholm, 1968, pp. 82-83. See also *Development of Secondary Education – Trends and Implications,* OECD, 1969, Chapter II.

There may also be *pedagogical differentiation,* i.e. differentiation exclusively *within* the framework of the class. Thus, a class may be divided into two halves according to pupils' ability in a given subject, with the teacher instructing one-half at a time. Or it may be possible, particularly if self-instructional material is available, to give individual tasks on which each pupil can, in principle, work at his own speed and at his own level of ability. Pedagogical differentiation (which should rather be called *individualization*) can, of course, be applied to any school structure.

The change from a dualistic or parallel system, in which pupils are divided at an early age according to "talent" and "wishes", to a comprehensive system, in which this selection is postponed to a later stage, has been brought about by a combination of economic and socio-political factors. Economic, because the rigid selective system is suited to an economy with a relatively small professional élite, whereas economic and technological changes of the past twenty years have produced considerable shifts in the skill structure of the labour force, resulting in an increasing demand for highly skilled personnel. Socio-political, because, rightly or wrongly, education is being increasingly seen as the democratic substitute for inherited wealth and social position, an outlook which cannot but increase the pressure for equality of educational opportunity.*

One of the alleged advantages of comprehensive education is that the age of decision for placing young people in the streams of education bound for higher education is delayed compared to the traditional school system. American studies stress the importance of the school as a centre for cultural diffusion, especially the diffusion of educational values. The so-called Coleman Report** has documented that the influence of the other pupils (the "student body characteristics" as it is called in the Report) on school achievement is important. From the evaluation of Title I programmes it was noted earlier in this paper that their impact on older pupils appeared to be more significant as compared to interventions at an early age. This finding is confirmed by many other studies. All this – influence of the peer group, higher motivations and aspirations at an older age – are factors that argue in favour of comprehensive schools.

In contrast with present pre-school training and compensatory education, which are in the main additional activities leaving the educational system unchanged, the comprehensive school could be part of a general educational policy aimed at tackling the problem of the socially underprivileged and based on the assumption that social mobility may be brought about through the development of the individual. However, and the American example is there to show it, what is most important in this context is the *kind* of comprehensive school in terms of organisational and pedagogical differentiation, and quality of instruction. As

* T. Husén, *Responsiveness and Resistance in the Educational System to Changing Needs of Society,* Stockholm, 1968.

** James S. Coleman *et al., Equality of Educational Opportunity,* U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., 1966.

noted earlier, equality of school inputs does not result in equality of outputs. The idea of an improved comprehensive education was expressed by Fantini and Weinstein in the following terms:

> "True process change involves changing the institution of education at its core – the entire system of education from teacher techniques, curriculum content and teacher training to administrative organisation and personnel; from the physical plant to the very attitudes and philosophy which underlie the entire educational system. In short, an up-to-date process can only come about by constructing *a new model,* a model based on the belief that institutions must adjust to *people*, rather than the other way round. In essence, this requires a change in the behavioural roles among educational personnel within the system. Educational personnel must be willing and able to recognize that there are *no human failures,* only programme and institutional failures." *

Comprehensive education is not a panacea; its success in promoting equality of educational opportunity will depend largely on the right mix of organisational and pedagogical differentiation with a view to exploiting to the maximum potential talent and minimizing as much as possible the drawbacks due to difference in culture and environment.

4. RECURRENT EDUCATION

The idea of delaying part or parts of education until a more mature age is gaining increasing attention in several Member countries. Tradition holds that as much education as possible should be squeezed into the early years of life. Indeed, as was noted earlier in this paper, a debate has been taking place in the United States on the merits or otherwise of teaching 3 to 4 year olds to read, and even to write. The prevailing notion is that a total of, say, 16 years, of education should be given between the ages of, say, 6 and 21. In contrast with, but by no means in opposition to, this notion is the idea that education could be spread over a much longer period, that, for instance, a total of 16 years could be given between the ages of 6 and 30, or 6 and 40.

The reasons for such a spread are manifold. There is the question of motivation and attitudes towards education. Many talented people are diverted from education at a young age by lack of motivation and even prejudice in their home and their environment, but become motivated at a later stage in their lives, after having had the opportunity of comparing themselves with others in a work environment. Many young people would simply prefer to leave school at, say, 16 if they knew that a guaranteed possibility exists to resume their education at a later stage in life. Then there is the question of the flexibility

* *The Disadvantaged, op. cit.,* pp. 228-9. Elsewhere Fantini calls this approach "total system reform", see "Intervention Alternatives for Urban Education", in *Equal Educational Opportunity, op. cit.,* pp. 243-4.

of the educational system. Spreading the educational period over a longer time span would make the educational system much more responsive to changes in the labour market and, at the same time, give the individual more flexible opportunities for his development.

At the Sixth Conference of European Ministers of Education, held at Versailles in May 1969, Mr. Olof Palme, the then Swedish Minister of Education, gave an important address, from which we have extracted the following passages.

> "We may already assume that we shall not be able to afford an educational system with large elements of recurrent education if youth education is allowed to continue developing at an unchanged rate. The first question we must ask then is the following: Where can the restriction be set in the first place? A restriction of school education, including upper secondary education, would presumably hit pupils from lower social groups. For reasons of equality we, therefore, cannot refrain from a youth education for all of 11-12 years as normal length. Moreover, upper secondary education in one form or another will certainly be needed to satisfy the labour market's increasing demand of trained manpower.
>
> "The only remaining material possibility is therefore to reduce the growth of post-secondary education in order to enable adult education to expand. This thought may appear absurd to many. The solution I have in mind, however, is not to take from the one and give to the other. Let us regard instead, the entire education coming after school education as a *unit*, organisationally, and from the point of view of resources. Of courses I do not intend to deal with all questions and problems connected with such a radical structural change. I believe, however, that here is the central issue of educational policy in the times to come. And since this issue is indeed very closely connected with the development of secondary education I find it appropriate to touch upon some of its more interesting aspects. I think that the best way for me to illustrate the question at issue is to assume – as a hypothesis, representing an extreme, this I am fully aware of, that all post secondary education is organised on a recurring basis, that all people, after completing upper secondary education, go out into a job, that after some time at work they take another period of education, then return to a job again, pass through another period of education and so on.
>
> "A system of this kind would have considerable consequences on upper secondary education because in such a system upper secondary education would be the basis both for entry into the labour market and for continued education. It would among other things, be necessary to give a vocational bias for all lines of upper secondary education, even to those which today essentially lead to higher education. On the other hand, there would still be a need for a large element of general theoretical subjects as a basis for recurrent education."

After having touched on the difficulties, limitations and possibilities of this idea of recurrent education, Mr. Palme mentioned some of the effects on individuals and society which the alternation between education and occupational work may have:

"For the individual, recurrent education ought to have several advantages. We all have a need for variety, whatever our occupation is. The student with educational neurosis and the person in working life with symptoms of stress would both perhaps get to grips with their problems if they were given the opportunity of a change of activity for a time. Leisure time would be used by many in a more valuable way than now and the individual would have a better opportunity to get to know his aptitudes. Absolute individual failures would be less common, as everybody would have a repeated second chance.

"Recurrent education should help us on the way towards *equality* in society. The interplay between different human activities would result in their being regarded in various respects as on an equal footing. The understanding between different social groups would increase as people had more similar experiences. The relations between the generations would improve."

Contrary to the three previous strategies reviewed in this section of the paper, the recurrent education model has not yet been tried out in any country. It should not be equated to existing schemes of adult education. Indeed, the return of adolescents and adults to education is at present very difficult *in practice* and relatively few have the necessary surplus of energy and perseverance to accomplish studies – *alongside* their occupational work – some or many years after they have left school. The existing schemes do not change the basic education model at all and cannot be expected, therefore, to satisfy the needs of those young people who do not conform to the prevailing institutional framework or pattern of education.

The introduction of recurrent education would constitute a radical departure from this framework and would clearly have widespread effects on all other sectors of education. Organisational and pedagogical differentiation along some of the lines traced above would have to be introduced at the secondary level to give it more flexibility, and thus enable people to resume their education at any time. In fact, recurrent education is a strategy that comes closest to a total reform of the educational system. It is dealt with at some length in Part Two of this paper.

III

SOME CONSEQUENTIAL ISSUES

The four strategies taken together cover the entire educational system and, practically, a person's entire life span. In terms of the three theoretical approaches mentioned at the beginning of the previous chapter, all four are heavily biased towards the educational theory, though in varying degree. The comprehensive school is, of course, the purest illustration of that theory. Pre-school training and compensatory education at the primary level are predominantly concerned with school and teacher variables, though the more dynamic of these programmes touch upon the cultural theory in as far as they pay attention to language and to the family pedagogical environment. Recurrent education, on the other hand, touches upon the structural theory in as far as it aims at giving the individual better possibilities in his career as well as enriching his leisure.

The tentative conclusions that can be drawn from the consideration of the four strategies raise important issues, some of which are summarized below. They serve at the same time as an introduction to Part Two, devoted to recurrent education.

1. OBJECTIVES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Let us first consider educational objectives. If we accept the conclusions of the above survey, we have to acknowledge that there is a gap between the declared objective of educational equality and its realisation. This is largely due to the fact that equal educational opportunity is rarely formulated by policy-makers in terms which have precise operational meaning. It is essential, therefore, to establish realistic operational targets, formulated in terms of resource and other practical implications, and to follow practical performance by constant evaluation. In this connection, such questions as, for example, the methods of selection for upper secondary and post-secondary education, the adaptation of the teaching process to the poor performer and the disadvantaged as well as the good performer, etc., will have to be squarely faced.

2. DEMAND FOR EDUCATION

During the past ten years, educational policy has been literally swamped by the growth of the social demand for education. There is little sign of any slackening of this demand; on the contrary, there is every likelihood that it will continue to expand, particularly at the higher levels. As a result of the work on educational economics and of the improvement of educational statistics, we can now gauge more accurately the growth of education in the past ten to twenty years and the trends which are built into that growth. It should, therefore, be possible to make some broad estimates of the likely structure of educational demand in the next decade. However, one can no longer be satisfied with single-valued forecasts and perspectives. The emphasis will now have to shift to *alternative* educational futures, based upon alternative assumptions with respect to policy decisions, as well as upon alternative objectives. These assumptions of a policy character will have to be made explicit as soon as one moves from general to operational formulations of the equal educational opportunity objective.

3. EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURE

The most important question raised by the consideration of the alternative strategies is that of the structure of education. It is whether or not a major re-design of the educational system is required in order to harmonize it more effectively with the needs of modern society. Can we conceive of an educational system which gives a much greater freedom of choice than the present one without endangering the chances of the pupils and students and the functions of the school? Will it be possible to develop syllabi and curricula sufficiently flexible to satisfy the often conflicting claims of adults, the disadvantaged, and pupils from the middle and upper classes, all recipients of education? What are, in terms of organisational and pedagogical structures, the implications of recurrent education, of the abolition of schools for the *élite,* of the adaptation of programmes to the needs of the disadvantaged? Until now, educational policy has, on the whole, been based implicitly on the assumption that urgent problems could be solved by creating supplementary activities and leaving the nucleus of the system intact. In the light of the conclusions reached above, the question will have to be faced whether such a policy is consistent with the idea of democratic society and to what extent it lowers social and economic barriers.

4. EQUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY – WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Lastly, one has to consider the practical meaning of equality of educational opportunity, and thus also face the constraints imposed by the structural theory such as those relating, for example, to occupational opportunity, social mobility and distribution of personal incomes.

We know, for instance, that the earnings gap is much greater than the learning gap. No doubt, people with the same number of years of education, but with a different social background, show on the average differences in achievement levels; but these differences are significantly smaller than the differences in earnings. It might then be asked, equal educational opportunity to what purpose? What could recurrent education do to remedy, at least partly, this situation?

Then there is the problem of finance. Radical educational reforms will require greatly increased expenditures, and the educational sector will have to compete for such expenditures with other social sectors, health, for instance. The result may be a growth in the private financing of education, a development which could endanger the achievement of targets for educational equality. We need, therefore, to define the relationship between private and public spending on education in the context of the educational objectives to be achieved. We also need a clear view on the allocation of resources to education on the basis of its social value.

The central issue which emerges from the above discussion can be summed up in the following twin question:

How far can one go, within defined economic, social, cultural and financial constraints, in achieving equality of educational opportunity?

If one would like to go further, what would this mean in terms of changes required in the economic and social structure of society?

The promise of equal educational opportunity without a clearly defined and *active* public policy, stating *how much* can be achieved and over what *period of time,* may be short-sighted and dangerous.

Part Two

RECURRENT EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

Recurrent education, as briefly sketched out in the preceding part, is one of the more promising strategies aimed at equalizing educational opportunity, and as such deserves to be discussed at some length. However, before embarking on such a discussion, it might be just as well to dispel a possible misunderstanding which could arise from a confusion of recurrent education with existing adult education schemes, a confusion which might all the more easily occur as both types of education are destined for the adult rather than the juvenile. Let us point out then the main differences between the two.

Adult education, in the traditional sense, is a type of *informal* education embracing *any* kind of training, retraining, refresher course, etc., given in a variety of ways, such as evening classes, correspondence courses, on and off-the-job training, people's universities, etc., and usually of a *part-time* nature.

Recurrent education is *formal,* and *preferably full-time*, education for adults who want to resume their education, interrupted earlier for a variety of reasons. In contrast with most adult education schemes, it is meant to give access to higher levels of education, and is not, therefore, a blind alley.

It follows from the foregoing that, whereas adult education is an addition to the present educational structure without in any way changing it, recurrent education constitutes a break with the institutional and pedagogical structures of present education.

However, if these two types of education differ greatly from one another, they are by no means mutually exclusive. The introduction of recurrent education would not in any way detract from the value of adult education schemes. Indeed, *the two should and could be linked,* and we shall see later how this could best be achieved.

In the pages which follow, we shall examine, first, the objectives of recurrent education and the arguments for and against it, and then review its main educational, economic, social and political implications.

I

ARGUMENTS AND OBJECTIVES

In its purely educational objectives, recurrent education differs little from present forms of formal education. Where it does differ is in its primary social objectives which, broadly speaking, are: equity, occupational flexibility, and integration of education with active life. It is thought that recurrent education is more likely to attain these three social objectives than the present educational structure. The arguments against recurrent education are based either on the belief that these objectives are already being satisfactorily achieved with present educational facilities, or on the conviction that these objectives will never be achieved, whatever the system of education.

Clearly, recurrent education is not the *only* means of achieving the three social objectives mentioned above; existing adult education schemes can also contribute to their attainment, and much could be learned from it when forming the structure of recurrent education. But the primary objective of adult education is, therefore, only marginally relevant to our issues. One could also say that many other types of present education aim, though perhaps not *primarily*, at these same goals and approach them with a varying degree of effectiveness by using different kinds and amounts of resources; hence the need for situating recurrent education within the context of all other types and levels of education as it now exists.

Quite apart from educational policy, there are other social and cultural policies which focus on these same social objectives. In a study of recurrent education we must, therefore, compare its potential impact with that of these other non-educational policies and analyse the interactions between them. It is likely that the intensity and nature of these interactions in the case of recurrent education will differ greatly from those obtaining with the present system of education. One of the main purposes of our analysis is to elucidate these almost unexplored interrelationships and to determine the role that can be played by

recurrent education if and when it replaces traditional forms of formal and informal education.

1. THE EQUITY OBJECTIVE

With regard to the objective of equity, recurrent education has a dual role to play – first, to compensate for the deficiencies of past education, and second, to give the individual a further chance to take advantage of educational opportunities. Let us consider each of these two points.

The tremendous expansion of education has resulted in greatly increasing educational opportunity for the younger generation. This has been particularly the case since the educational explosion in secondary education in the mid 1950s. This, in turn, has had the effect of greatly widening the gap between successive generations even between those who are now in the late twenties and early thirties, on the one hand, and the younger generation, on the other. The first role of recurrent education, a temporary one, would be to narrow this gap by offering the older generation the educational opportunity it did not have earlier.

The other role is of a permanent nature and constitutes the very essence of the new scheme. It has to do with the fact that motivation for study does not always coincide with the present age-span for schooling. Such motivation may come later in life and may result from different causes, such as the challenges and demands of the working environment, the realization of the handicap which a poor education puts in the way of building up a career, a desire to develop a hitherto unexploited intellectual potential, or simply a thirst for knowledge as a means of self-fulfilment. It is not unreasonable to assume that more mature people may develop a motivation for education which they did not have at a young age. A system of recurrent education would enable them to resume formal full-time education at the point at which it was interrupted.

It remains to be seen whether priority should be given to the first or the second of these two functions, and how such priority would affect the programmes and recruitment. These may be quite different for each of the two functions.

Spreading educational opportunity over a longer age-span would diminish the pressure on the traditional school system, particularly on higher education, without diminishing educational opportunity. No doubt the risk that, given the chance of returning to school at some future date, too many pupils would leave earlier than they otherwise might, and that those early leavers would later feel least motivated to resume their education, cannot be disregarded. This risk may diminish once recurrent education has become the general educational strategy, in particular, once the structures and programmes of secondary and higher education are suitably adapted to it, and an active recruitment policy is in operation.

2. THE OBJECTIVE OF OCCUPATIONAL FLEXIBILITY

The second major objective of recurrent education is to ensure effective interaction between education and the socio-economic sector. Education leads to a certificate or a diploma which serves as an entrance ticket to the labour market; but there is little feedback from the labour market to the educational system to indicate either the kind or type of education required, or the number of entrance tickets needed for the various occupations. In other words the present educational system is not very flexible, i.e. sensitive, to changes occurring in the labour market, at least not in the short run.

But these changes are bound to become more marked and more frequent with the acceleration of technological progress, and the difficulties in forecasting occupational structures, already considerable, will become much more daunting. As a result, there will be an even greater need than at present for a flexible educational system capable of adapting itself at short notice to the exigencies of technological change and of offering the right kind of training at the right time to the right people. Though the remedy may lie, partly, in a rethinking of the content and objectives of present forms of education, it lies mainly in a flexible system of recurrent education, aimed not only at training people in new techniques, but also at retraining those whose skills become inadequate to cope with constantly changing techniques.

3. THE OBJECTIVE OF INTEGRATION

With the steep increase in enrolments and the prolongation of compulsory schooling the dichotomy between the educational sector and other sectors of human activity, and between the educational span and the active working life of the individual has become so marked as to raise serious social problems.

Education is becoming a powerful quasi-autonomous force of social and cultural criticism and is building up a claim for an active say in the shaping of society. But we are not concerned here with the conflict which this evolution creates between those who are clamouring for change and those who have an interest in maintaining a socio-economic structure safeguarded by an educational system which respects established values and cherishes the socio-cultural traditions on which their acceptance by society rests. Rather are we concerned with the values of the young generation as opposed to those which it finds on entering active working life.

Due to the increasing length of schooling, most young people have developed their personality and acquired a set of values by the time they leave the educational system. The values they find when entering "active life" are very different from those they have formed during their educational period. The former are most concretely embodied in the socio-economic institutions within which they have to exert their activity. The danger resulting from this dichotomy is perhaps not so

much the *clash* between these two sets of values – though the events of the past few years may give rise to some preoccupations with regard to such a possibility – as the growing *irrelevance* of one system to the other and, eventually, a growing gap between the younger and the older generations, and between those who administer and those who are being administered.

In a quite different context, there is the problem of the *desirability* of further expanding the traditional system of education. At present, the arguments against extending the educational period for an ever growing proportion of the school-age population centre around the material possibilities of a further expansion of the educational system. The pressure, notably on higher education, has become so great that, even in countries where access to higher education was traditionally opened to all those who had successfully completed the appropriate secondary level, restrictive policies, such as *numerus fixus* or *numerus clausus*, had to be introduced or are being seriously considered. However, even if the resources were virtually unlimited, it may be seriously doubted whether full enrolment of the population in, say the 4-24 age group would be *desirable*. It is this question of desirability (related to our discussion on the two sets of values) which is likely to become the main issue in future discussions on the expansion of education.*

In both these respects – integrating education with active working life, and coping with the problem of more education for more people – recurrent education offers considerable possibilities. Its potential socio-political consequences are immense, its contribution to solving some of the greatest dilemmas of modern society very real. Its most immediate and tangible effect would lie in the domain of occupational structures and career perspectives. The overall influence of education on the life pattern and career prospects of the individual could be profoundly altered by the combination of job experience *and* later education which recurrent education provides. These aspects alone are of such socio-political importance and complexity that they need the most careful study and the best expertise available. Such a study would have to include a full analysis of the occupational and socio-economic as well as educational consequences and implications. The political options which must be chosen before recurrent education could be introduced as an alternative educational strategy would require the involvement of decision-makers at the highest political level.

* This does not mean that there is no room for further expansion of enrolments in secondary and higher education, particularly in most European countries. The point of "saturation" has probably not yet been reached in most of them, if by saturation we mean the desirability as defined above, i.e. how much education and for how many people should be provided early in life, and how much and for how many later in life.

II

PROBLEMS AND IMPLICATIONS

1. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT OF LEARNING

The arguments for introducing education at the earliest possible age are based in evidence from learning psychology that the early development of human characteristics related to learning and early learning experience have a decisive impact on the subject's later educational career. The effort needed to make up for losses in learning ability sustained at an early age later becomes enormous; that is why remedial action for socio-culturally disadvantaged groups must be taken as early as possible. This has resulted in the mushrooming of pre-school and compensatory programmes, described in Part One of this paper. To plead now in favour of postponing part of education to a later age may, therefore, seem a contradiction of this concept.

However, it will be clear that a necessary pre-condition for recurrent education to be at all successful is that the necessary achievement level has been reached for take-off into higher levels of education. Without such an essential basis the individual simply could not benefit from further education. This implies that, *for certain social groups*, pre-school education programmes and compensatory education are a prerequisite for recurrent education and not a substitute. This also implies that the arguments in favour of postponing further education (after the basic period of 10 to 12 years) to a later age do not necessarily plead against "early learning".

The first of these arguments relates to motivation for learning. There is little doubt that a strong motivation for learning can arise at a later age, especially in cases where the traditional kind of education limits the career prospects of the individual. And research has shown that differences in motivation, all other factors being equal, lead to important differences in achievement. The evidence of certain adult education schemes is particularly impressive in this connection.

The second argument in favour of recurrent education is that it provides the means of trying out several alternative learning strategies

which are better adapted to the individual needs of the students than traditional school programmes. But such alternative strategies, made to measure, so to speak, require a high degree of initiative on the part of the student, and they are, therefore, much more suited to adults than to adolescents. They presuppose the full use of modern teaching aids, and it should be stressed, in this connection, that recurrent education will create both a major opportunity for integrating such aids into teaching and a major challenge to develop them. In other words, recurrent education will provide a strong incentive for developing new learning and teaching strategies and for exploiting fully the potential for educational achievement which, notwithstanding the powerful effects of genetic factors and of social and learning experiences in early life, remains important. Recent research provides abundant evidence that the existing school systems have exploited only a fraction of this potential.

Finally, we must turn again to the problem of the relative influence on educational achievement of home and social environment, on the one hand of "school factors" on the other. Evidence has shown (and some of it was presented in Part One) that the former looses in relative influence as children grow up, but hardly any research has as yet been done on the effect of these two sets of factors upon the educational performance of adults. However, observations made on current adult education schemes have shown the strong influence of the peer group – in this case primarily the occupational milieu – on motivations and expectations of adults. Thus, the crucial role of *home environment* in the case of pre-school and compensatory education programmes is assumed in recurrent education of the adult by his broader *social environment*, especially his *work environment*. This shift may very well plead in favour of recurrent education, although it is only fair to admit that little is known about the implied interrelationships.

However this may be, the question of "late" versus "early" education has to be squarely faced and optimal combinations of the partial educational strategies reviewed in Part One will have to be devised for the various subgroups in the population.

2. INSTITUTIONAL AND PEDAGOGICAL ASPECTS

Until recently, educational research and educational policies were little concerned with the organisation of educational systems. Great importance was attached to educational objectives and to pedagogical arrangements, but the structure of education was considered as a somewhat irrelevant factor which, in any case, depended on the particular situation of a country. But recent developments in secondary and higher education have shown that the likelihood of reaching a given objective depended in a decisive manner of the nature of administrative and structural arrangements. What has also become clear, sometimes in a dramatic way, in the close interdependence between levels of education; expansion at the secondary level creates pressure at the

higher level, reforms of arithmetic curricula or of reading methods at the primary level greatly affect the secondary level, changes in admission policies of universities affect standards in secondary academic schools, etc. If anything is to be learned from the recent failures of educational policies, it is that such policies must be comprehensive and treat all that concerns education as a whole serving the same basic objectives. The introduction of recurrent education, if it is to be a success, must, therefore, be part of a wider educational policy in which the reciprocal effects of all types and levels of education are carefully co-ordinated.

At this point it is necessary to recall Mr. Olof Palme's observation, quoted in Part One, to the effect that recurrent education should only be introduced after a basic period of 10 to 12 years of compulsory schooling. However, and this was also touched upon by Mr. Palme, the introduction of recurrent education has important implications on the structure and content of this basic education, particularly on its last years.

Because of its objectives and its clientele, recurrent education cannot be organised on the models of existing secondary, higher or adult education schemes. Its organisation must respond to the needs of a clientele whose initial motivation to resume education is high, but whose demands and expectations are of many different kinds; whose former learning experience will vary within a wide range; and whose home and neighbourhood environments, also very diverse, will affect their learning achievement in a way which is very different from what we now know about the impact of this factor on learning. What is clear is that recurrent education cannot be organised on a strict year and grade basis; its recipients must be able to take up and to leave studies whenever their situation allows or demands it. They must also be able to progress at different rates in different subjects, and to choose their subjects according to their needs and their tastes. This probably implies dropping the stringent condition of full-time courses. The programmes offered should *also* include part-time variants in order to increase the flexibility of the proposed scheme and to serve as a first step towards transforming existing adult educational programmes for integration into recurrent education.

These various requirements have led to the idea of "capitalizable units of education", the *unités capitalisables,* which have been tried out on a limited scale in France. In this system, students acquire credit points for every "unit" of education which they have acquired, and combinations of such units may entitle them to admission to other educational institutions at a higher level. The system allows students to interrupt their education and resume it at some later date in accordance with their particular situation. There must, of course, be a minimum of organisational coherence, and the knowledge acquired by unit credits a long time ago may have to be "refreshed" before the student can resume his education at the point at which he interrupted it.

It is clear that the introduction of recurrent education would necessitate radical changes in the structure and objectives of the present educational system in order to adapt it to this new strategy. In this connection we shall examine successively higher education, secondary education and also adult education.

i) *Higher education*

If higher education is taken to mean all education that follows secondary education, it can be seen that its evolution in the developed countries follows in some ways the pattern which would characterize recurrent education. The trend is towards dividing long university programmes into several "units", each of which leads to a certificate providing a real professional qualification and access to higher levels of education. Access to higher education is being widened to include pupils from non-academic secondary establishments. As a result, the dividing line between university and post-secondary education is losing much of its sharpness.

The recent history of higher education has shown that the existence of two parallel systems of post-secondary education catering for the same age group has little justification, and is becoming, in fact, more and more detrimental as the trend towards mass participation increases. This evolution would facilitate the necessary adaptation of tertiary education to recurrent education. The former would have to evolve further towards a system which has exits at several levels with corresponding diplomas or degrees and enables students to progress at different speeds in different subjects. Naturally, the students who, in such a system, enrol in recurrent education as adults with professional experience will have other expectations from studies than those who enter the system immediately after having completed their secondary studies. As adult citizens and professional workers, they will be more demanding than many young students as regards the relevance of the programmes to their needs; and an active participation in the decisions about what the programmes ought to be and how the institutions are to be run, which for young students is at best an exercise for their future role, will for adults be something that goes without saying.

ii) *Secondary education*

As far as secondary education is concerned, it can be assumed that the trend towards full enrolment of the age group up to 16-17 will continue, and that there will be an increasing trend towards programmes which prepare for higher education. This will still further increase the pressure on the latter. At the same time, it will become increasingly difficult to maintain technical training programmes which provide only occupational qualifications but are blind alleys in that they offer no opportunity to come back to the mainstream which leads to higher education.

Recurrent education would alleviate the pressures and bottlenecks inherent in parallel systems of secondary education, but its main task at this level would lie in remedying the imbalances which result from such systems, in particular, in improving the general education of those who embarked (too) early on technical training programmes, and in providing basic technical notions and concepts to those who followed a general educational programme. It is only after providing this "supplementary" education that recurrent education could assume its real role.

For this reason, recurrent education can probably yield its full benefits only if secondary education is made comprehensive, so that eventually everybody can attain the minimum level of education which is to be the basis for further education. In this way, those who go from secondary school to a technical training course with a view to an occupation would have acquired a sufficient basis to return to school later in the framework of recurrent education. But such a system, if it is to be viable, must fulfil two other conditions:

a) after the completion of comprehensive secondary education, pupils must be able to exit from further schooling at several successive points. This means that upper secondary education would have to be organised in quasi-independent units, each keeping its own value and characteristics. A pupil leaving this level at any point corresponding to the completion of one of the units, would obtain the corresponding certificate which would enable him to resume his education at a later date and obtain the certificate for the next unit. In other words, *upper secondary as well as higher education must be organised in the form of capitalizable units;*

b) secondary school curricula need to be revised and divested of their exclusively humanistic bias. The basis of comprehensive education – on which all further education rests – must be that of general culture orientated towards the modern aspects of society, a society in which the industrial and technical reality plays a very important part, but whose functioning depends on highly complicated social structures and relationships. The curricula must, therefore, be re-oriented towards both the technical-industrial and the socio-cultural aspects of our society which have been largely ignored by traditional secondary education. This is perhaps the most arduous task confronting education, and on its successful accomplishment depends the viability of recurrent education as a means of bridging the gap between education and contemporary society.

iii) *Adult education*

As noted earlier, in the introduction to this part, the idea of recurrent education is not in conflict with that of adult education; indeed, the two should and could be linked together and complement each other to fulfil a similar role. For this purpose, as many adult education schemes as possible should be transformed so as to give access to further education. One could then conceive both as *one system* differing

only in the way in which education is given – full-time courses, on the one hand, part-time courses during the day or evening, during the week-end, during the vacation, etc., on the other.

Such an integration of adult education schemes with recurrent education would obviously not be compatible with the concept of the school or academic year, and here again the idea of capitalizable units would be the obvious solution. One would have to devise educational units of varying length, each of them well-defined and constituting a stepping stone towards a diploma or a degree. These units would comprise the minimum amount of subject matter to be covered before proceeding to the next stage and could be taken both on a full-time and part-time basis.

In fact, the concept of capitalizable units might be applied with advantage not only to an integrated system of recurrent and adult education, but to the whole educational system.

3. RECURRENT EDUCATION AND THE PRODUCTION PROCESS

The enrolment of a large number of adults normally engaged in occupational work will obviously affect the establishments, be they factories, offices or public administrations, which employ them. Two main questions arise in this connection:

a) what is the impact on the running of these establishments if a certain proportion of their personnel goes back to school?

b) what is to happen to the recipients of recurrent education when they have completed their additional training?

Clearly, if large numbers of specific groups of personnel were enrolled in full-time recurrent education, the impact on establishments or even industrial sectors might be prejudicial to their efficient functioning. On the other hand, one should also consider the possibility of adapting the organisation of work in factories, offices, etc., to the needs of recurrent education. One could envisage, for instance, facilities for a certain number of part-time jobs, or a revision of the daily time schedules for work. If recurrent education is to be successful, it must, therefore, offer a variety of forms, and if the economic sector is to take full advantage of it, it must also offer a variety of organisational structures adapted to these forms. In fact this is a question of mutual adaptation of recurrent education and economic activity. Constraints can be eased by political decisions, and as the introduction of recurrent education would in itself be a political decision, it would imply a reconsideration of the entire relationship between education and society, and the reshaping of economic organisation along appropriate lines.

As to the second question – what is to happen to graduates of recurrent education after they have completed their studies – it can only be answered in the larger context of social and occupational mobility. Recurrent education on a large scale would certainly greatly

increase this mobility. This issue needs, however, to be viewed in the larger context of the overall objectives of recurrent education.

4. RECRUITMENT POLICY

With regard to recruitment, the first question which arises is, who should be enrolled in recurrent education, and who should decide about it? This problem is obviously linked with that of finance dealt with below. If the financing were to be assured partly by private enterprise, the latter would probably claim a voice in the decision-making; this might be a strong argument against any financing by private enterprise. Ideally, the decision should be left to the individual and, for this, an active recruitment policy is a prerequisite. Without it, there is every likelihood that those most in need of recurrent education will not apply for it because of lack of information and inertia.

Recruitment will in most cases imply an investigation of the individual's family background and of his social and working environment as well as direct action on the individual himself. It requires from those in charge of recruitment a thorough knowledge of social, economic and educational aspects and interactions. It is doubtful whether such a task could be performed by teachers. It calls for a combination of qualities and skills which is not readily available and raises the important question of how to train people with such skills. For, in our context, recruitment means guidance during studies as well as choosing the candidates for them.

5. FINANCIAL ASPECTS

As far as financing is concerned, the question which comes immediately to mind is whether recurrent education would be more costly than traditional education. There is, however, no simple answer to this question. The cost of traditional education is bound to increase in the future, and, in this respect, recurrent education would at least reduce the waste of time and resources in that it would enable those with low motivation or those who, for whatever reason, perform badly to leave the educational system with the idea at the back of their minds that they could always return to it when they are more strongly motivated.

On the other hand, it should be borne in mind that the earnings foregone by adults returning to education are higher than those of young people, and that adults can rarely count on any financial help from their family; on the contrary, most of them will have to support a family, and will have contracted obligations and adopted a way of life which cannot easily be changed. These considerations would make for increased costs.

The financial aspects become still more complex when the concept of educational units is brought into the picture, because this concept calls for a possibly costly reorganisation of secondary, higher and

adult education. The balance between these various factors will have to be established for each specific case in terms of probabilities. What will be needed is cost-effectiveness analyses of the various alternatives, taking account of their impact both on education as a whole and on economic and social activity. A particular aspect which needs to be studied in this context is the unit cost of recurrent education as compared to that of traditional education.

Another important question is whether, and if so to what extent, the recipient of recurrent education should contribute to its cost. Such contributions might be facilitated by loans or insurance schemes. Any financial help might vary in accordance with the age, family responsibilities and income of the recipient. And if we accept the principle that everyone has a right to, say, 16 years of full-time education – 10 or 12 of them to be taken between the ages of 6 and 16-18, and the rest later – and that this amount of education should be subsidized fully or partly, it is clear that those who have exhausted the ration of 16 years and who want to continue their education would have to pay their own way. In their case, part-time education may prove a suitable solution. This is one more reason why recurrent education should comprise a judicious mixture of part-time and full-time courses.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Coming to the end of this review, which has led us to discuss in more detail the objectives, arguments and implications of recurrent education, it would appear useful to emphasize several points:

1. Recurrent education should not be seen as just another system of education in juxtaposition with existing schemes. Recurrent education should gradually *replace* the present post-compulsory levels of education as well as part of the existing adult education schemes. The end objective, in this context, is to have *one system* organised according to the principles of recurrent education as outlined in Part Two of this document.

2. This implies among other things, determining and putting into operation an optimal relationship between recurrent education as just defined, and the *remaining* forms of adult education which cannot, and probably should not, be pressed into the framework of recurrent education.

3. One of the most important prerequisites for the success of recurrent education consists of organising this form of education along the lines of "educational units", doing away with the existing organisation of education according to academic years.

4. Such an organisational reform of the educational system is well in line with the already noticeable trend towards a much closer adaptation of educational objectives to the aspirations and possibilities of individuals.

5. As to the equal educational opportunity objective, and coming back to the discussion in Part One, there is no contradiction between recurrent education taken at a later age with other educational strategies based on the idea of starting the formal educational period as early as possible. For certain social groups it is indeed indispensable to give pre-school education and compensatory education at the primary level in order to get the individual to a take-off point without which they would not be able to benefit from further education.

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